Expanding the Johari Windows to Describe Interpersonal Communication

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During the past 40 years considerable focus has been placed on the Johari Window (Luft, 1984), a tool designed to understand the process of self-disclosure and to increase self-awareness of the conscious and unconscious knowledge of self. Typically, a single, four quadrant model is employed to achieve these goals. The present paper offers an expansion to the application of the original model. Rather than a single model representing two interactants, two interlinked windows are recommended. This change provides a unique window for each interactant participating in the communication process. The window for each interactant has three unique quadrants (i.e., Blind, Hidden, and Unknown) and a shared Open quadrant. The proposed modification to the original Johari Window model illustrate more clearly the transactional nature of self-disclosure and provide the means to quantify and analyze the reciprocal awareness resulting from self-disclosure. These benefits offer a more sophisticated basis for instruction and research.

Keywords: self-disclosure, reciprocal communication, Johari Window, transactional communication

RATIONALE

The Johari Window, a well-known awareness model, is a descriptive tool used to improve communication and relationships. Using participants' self-disclosure, the model can also be used to illustrate and improve self-awareness and mutual understanding between relational partners.

The Johari Window, pronounced "joeharry" after the creators, Joseph (Joe) Luft and Harrington (Harry) Ingham, represents the varieties of personal awareness. Luft and Harrington's model is divided into four quadrants. Each quadrant represents the feelings, beliefs, values, attitudes, emotions, intentions, motives, motivations, etc. (hence, referred to as *information*) that is known or unknown by 'the self' and/or the other person in the interaction. These four areas are labeled as open, hidden, blind, and unknown (Luft, 1984). The open quadrant includes *information* about 'the self' that is known to "the self" and to the other. The hidden quadrant includes i*nformation* about 'the self' that is known to 'the self' and not to the other. The blind quadrant includes *information* about the self that is known to the other, but not to 'the self.' The unknown quadrant includes *information* about 'the self,' known neither to the self nor to the other.

Though the model has proven to be a valuable heuristic device for speculating about human relations, modifying the presentation of this model may provide a more accurate illustration of the dynamics of self-disclosure within a dyadic context. A single, four-quadrant model does not adequately capture the true nature of interpersonal self-disclosure. With the exception of the Open quadrant, no other quadrant in the model accurately nor clearly represents the quantity of *information* possessed by either participant. The Reciprocal Disclosure Model (i.e., two individual Johari Models with super-imposed Open Quadrants) illustrates the self/other awareness process resulting from self-disclosure more effectively than the original, single, four-quadrant model.

To understand self-disclosure more fully, it is important to understand two principles clearly relate to this communicative behavior. The first principle is the **Principle of Reciprocity** (Archer, 1979; Gouldner, 1960). According to this principle:

1. There is a tendency for interactants to get what they give (tell a secret; receive a secret).
2. There are levels of shared information (demographic, social, personal, and intimate).
3. Mutually attained levels of information serve to define the level of the dyadic relationship.

The second theory is the **Trust/Risk Relationship** (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). According to the Trust/Risk Relationship:

1. A person must risk something to disclose something about self.
2. If the risk is justified by trust, a person may trust more and thereby risk more.
3. The circle is reinforced by reciprocity, creating mutual power and trust (knowing equally about one another).

The following modification to the **Johari Window** emphasizes the role of social exchange and uncertainty reduction in the process of relationship development.

1. It demonstrates the use of the **Principle of Reciprocity**, or the dyadic effect.
2. It is dialectic.
3. It incorporates the **Trust/Risk Relationship**

The Reciprocal Disclosure Model provides a more conceptually clear understanding and explanation of the "unknown" quadrant, intimacy, and reciprocity (dyadic effect). This model interfaces two Johari Windows, with a joint open area. To ease understanding of this modification, a digital representation for the original Johari Window is provided to illustrate the connection for two participants (See Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1**
JOHARI WINDOWS
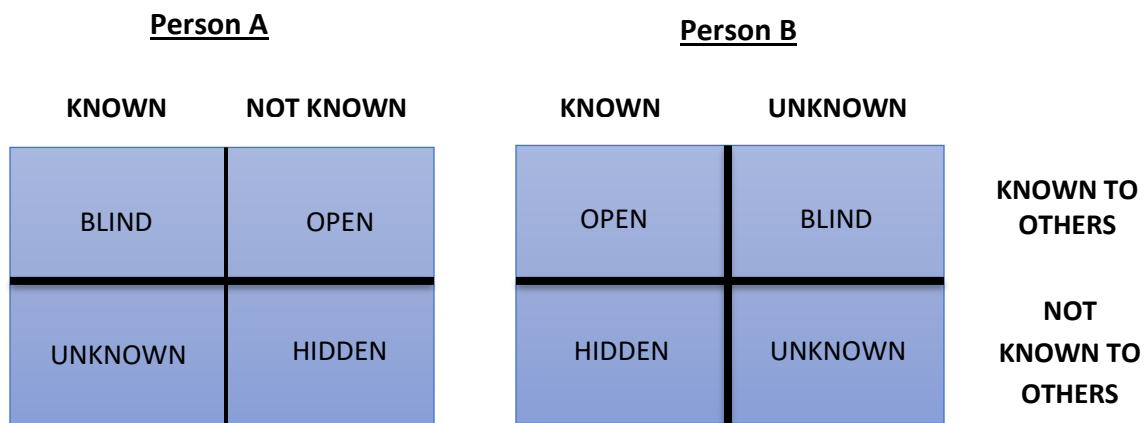
As is obvious from Figure 1, the connection between the two participants self-disclosive contributions are not represented. To more graphically illustrate this connection the proposed model (Reciprocal Disclosure Model) is offered. To create this new model the two independent models in Figure 1 are superimposed so as to aligned and overlap the Open panes for both windows. This adjustment creates a set of connected interpersonal windows as illustrated in Figure 2 below. Envision the two images being pushed

together (i.e., Person A's model is moved to the Right and Person B's model is moved to the Left). This integration represents the action resulting from mutual self-disclosure. As the models overlap, the Open quadrant becomes larger. The increase in the size of the Open quadrant is accounted for by a reduction in the size of the respective quadrant(s) for Persons A and B. In a practical sense, if Person A shares hidden *information* with Person B, the open quadrant becomes larger by gaining that space previously occupied by the secret *information* shared from "A's" hidden quadrant. In the mirror image model, the size of the Open quadrant is enlarged by accommodating the space sacrificed via disclosure of information from "B's" non-open quadrants.

If disclosure is represented by the mutual overlap of model "A" and model "B," one can see the impact of reciprocity. Mutual and directionally opposite movement of "A" and "B's" models demonstrate the continuous increase in the size of the Open quadrant as the amount of space previously occupied by the Blind, Hidden and Unknown quadrants for both A and B is sacrificed. Accordingly, mutual, directionally opposite movement of the "A" and "B" models illustrates reciprocity. "A" shares hidden *information* with "B." In response, "B" may share hidden or blind *information* with "A." This mutual influence is consistent with one of the many principles associated with the Johari Window model - All quadrants are influenced by a change in any one quadrant. Further, as the Open quadrant grows larger, the interpersonal awareness and subsequently the quality and quantity of communication improves. This interface between Person A and Person B is illustrated in the Reciprocal Interaction Model (See Figure 2)

FIGURE 2
RECIPROCAL INTERACTION MODEL
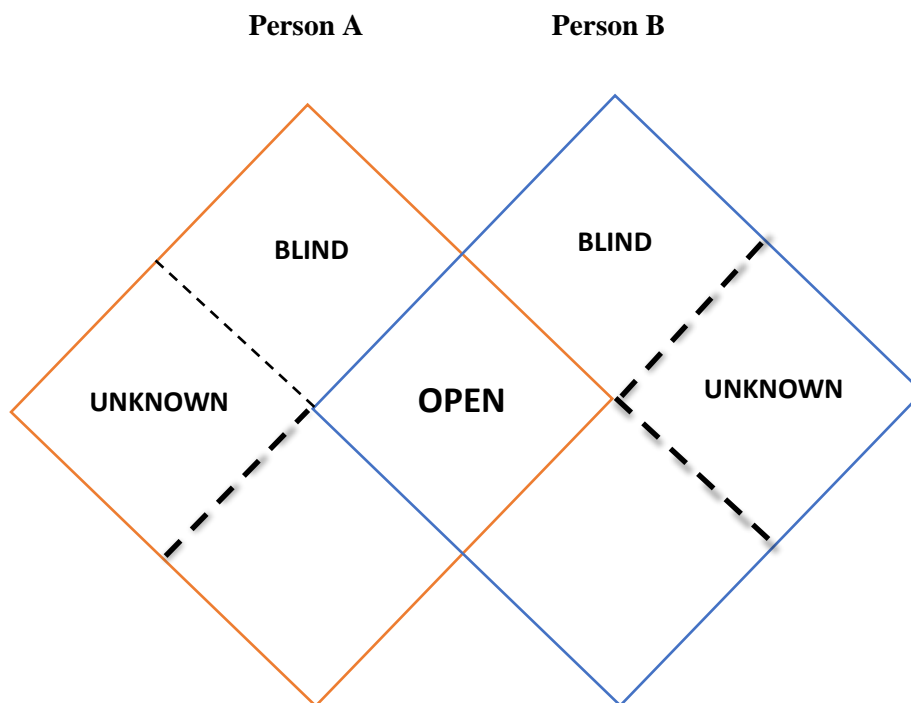
This modification to the **Johari Window** dramatically expands the ability to illustrate the process of self-disclosure and makes greater applications possible across interpersonal communication instruction and analysis. The Reciprocal Disclosure Model offers a new dynamic and a more descriptive opportunity for understanding and for discussion.

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS

To employ this model in an instructional setting, students are placed into dyads (assign pairs systematically rather than based on familiarity). Each dyad is required to participate in two (2) conversational interactions. The **first** interaction takes place in class. During this meeting, dyads are given approximately three (3) to five (5) minutes to: 1) introduce themselves to one another and 2) make arrangements (i.e., time and location) for a second meeting.

The **second** meeting takes place outside of class. This meeting iis scheduled so as to permit at least one (1) hour of uninterrupted interaction between partners. During this meeting students are asked to discuss the following areas:

1. Family
2. Religion
3. Morals and Ethics
4. What you like MOST about yourself (possibly including, your most proud moment).
5. What you like least about yourself (possibly including, your most embarrassing moment).

It is important that students structure their conversation so as to address these topics in the order listed above. These five areas of discussion are based on the level of risk associated with the intimacy of the *information* within the topic area (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000). Typically, people will begin communicating with low-risk topics, or small-talk, which includes sharing demographic data about self and family. As the conversation progresses, people begin "testing the waters" and take moderate risks to share beliefs and judgments, such as religion. As trust is built, people begin sharing feelings (usually positive feelings before moving to negative ones). This category includes telling secrets and is categorized by moderate to high-risk level. Finally, communication can reach levels of absolute honesty and openness, which only occurs in deep and authentic friendships. At this level, people will reveal their most guarded secrets (i.e., most embarrassing moments; Powell, 1969).

A neutral location is recommended for the second meeting. Neutrality will inhibit any affect "home territory" may have on the relative status of the participants. Furthermore, the interaction should be restricted to the two participants in the dyad. Additional people may interfere with the quality of the process.

After the dyad has engaged in the second conversation, each person should complete the Reciprocal Disclosure Ratings questionnaire. Based on the ratings, students should then record the appropriate changes in the Reciprocal Disclosure Ratings Model (See Figure 3). Students would bring results to class and discuss.

FIGURE 3
RECIPROCAL DISCLOSURE RATINGS MODEL

Using the information from your conversations complete the following ratings.

1. How much did your knowledge in the Hidden Quadrant decrease by:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
0 – 5%	**6-10%**	**11-15%**	**16-20%**	**21 – 25%**	**26 – 30%**

2. How much did your knowledge in the Blind Quadrant decrease by:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
0 – 5%	**6-10%**	**11-15%**	**16-20%**	**21 – 25%**	**26 – 30%**

3. How much did your knowledge in the Unknown Quadrant decrease by:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
0 – 5%	**6-10%**	**11-15%**	**16-20%**	**21 – 25%**	**26 – 30%**

4. Given your partner's ratings and your own, provide a rating for the increase of the Open Quadrant of the Model.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
0 – 5%	**6-10%**	**11-15%**	**16-20%**	**21 – 25%**	**26 – 30%**

Instructions for transfering both partners' ratings into the Reciprocal Disclosure Ratings Model below.
1. Darken those areas in the Hidden quadrant up to and including the percentage reported on the Rating Scale.
2. Darken those areas in the Blind quadrant up to and including the percentage reported on the Rating Scale.
3. Darken those areas in the Unknown quadrant up to and including the percentage reported on the Rating Scale.
4. Add the percentage scores for Question 1, 2, and 3 on the Rating Scale.
5. Add this total score to your partner's total score for step #4

Figure 4 illustrates the potential rating for the interface of the two participant using the Reciprocal Disclosure Ratings Models (See Figure 4).

FIGURE 4
ECIPROCAL DISCLOSURE RATINGS
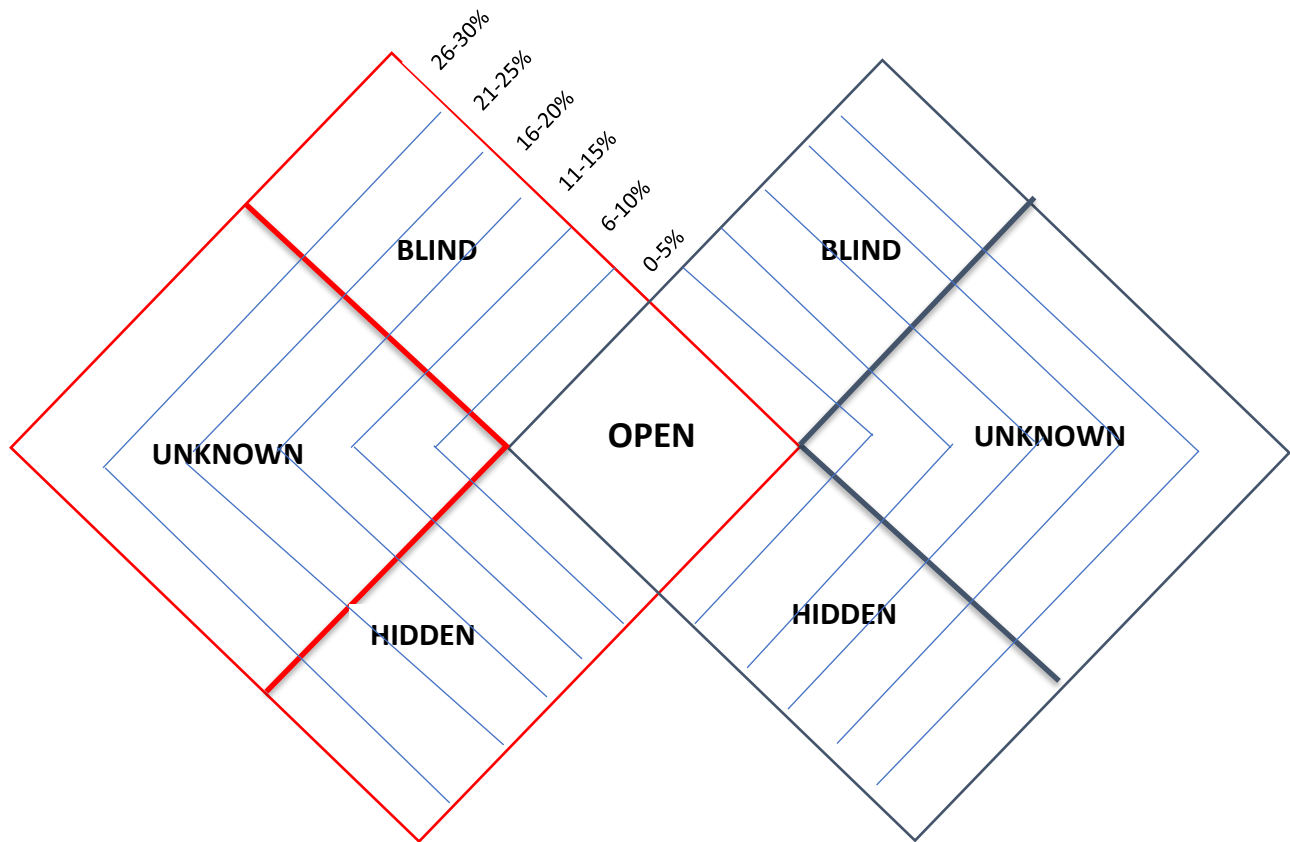
Having completed the rating for the new model. The way the group's self-discloure is reflected in the models is disussed. The following are potentional discussion questions:

1. What Quadrant changed the most?
2. What Quadrant changed the least?
3. What Quadrant changed the earliest?
4. What Quadrant changed the latest?
5. Was there a Quadrant that did not change?
6. Was there a pattern between the type of information disclosed by self in response to the information disclosed by partner?

QUALIFICATIONS

To protect the privacy and individuality of the participant specific qualification should be shared with the participants. Participants should keep in mind, the list of discussion topics are suggested and not required areas for discussion. If a student feels uncomfortable talking about any of the recommended areas, the student may/should skip that area (or areas). In addition, the student need not feel obligated to disclose any information believed to be too personal. Share only that information, that is percieved appropriate. This exercise (simulation) is NOT designed to force disclosure of personal secrets nor to force dyadic partners

to become "friends." The function of this assignment is to provide the basic data required to analyze the principles and dynamics of relationship development and self-disclosure. This analysis does not require disclosing personal nor intimate information. Reciprocal Disclosure ratings are a reflection/description of what happened, and the information share or withheld is illurstrated in the model. An accurate analysis is just as illustrative based on limited information disclosure as it is based on a large quantity of shared information.

EXPLANATION

Joseph Luft (1969) stated in his book, *Of Human Interaction: The Johari Model*, which has become a classic in the field, the importance of interpersonal involvement:

> Your talent and your potentials have a better chance of being developed if you as a person have access to your own feelings, your imagination, and your fantasy. If you can be open and free even with but one other person there is greater likelihood that you can be in touch with self. (p. 22)

Important aspects of relationships are the tasks people use to evaluate each other. Sharing feelings, building trusting relationships and taking risks and chances offer the rewards of a more whole self who fits into an interpersonal and a public world. It begins with the open quadrant of self, which is the apex, the very center of this modification of the **Johari Window**.

TYPICAL RESULTS

The Johari Window is typically a theoretical model that students understand on a surface level; recognizing that we freely share parts of ourselves, while closely guarding others. However, by using the modified Johari Window Model illustrated above, students are able to incorporate the transactional nature of interpersonal communication as two people illustrate and improve self and other awareness through self-disclosure. Students usually find the activity enlightening, especially during the discussion where they are asked to share their conversation experiences. Overall, students enjoy the activity and come to a deeper understanding of the transactional relationship between self and other.

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